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CONSTITUTION

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTH. CONGREGATION,

CATAWBA CO., N. C.

PREAMBLE.

We the undersigned members of the Ev. Lutheran Church, sensible of our spiritual needs and mindful of our Christian duties, in Jesus' name and with the hope of His blessing, adopt the subjoined Constitution, thereby to perfect the organization of a church in which we hope God to be both our Saviour and our Lord and we his people, praying that He will graciously multiply and prosper us to the praise of His great name. Amen.

CHAPTER I.

THE NAME.

The name of this congregation shall be ST. STEPHEN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTRINE.

ART. 1. This congregation confesses the canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God and therefore the only rule of faith and life. It also confesses the confessional writings of the Ev. Luth. Church as contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580 to be a correct interpretation of this word.

ART. 2. Doctrines and practices in conflict with this confession shall not be tolerated in this congregation.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEMBERSHIP.

ART. 1. Only those persons can become and be members of this congregation:

- a. who are baptized,
- b. who unreservedly accept as their own the confession of faith as laid down in the second chapter of this constitution,
- c. who abstain from the manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19--21) and lead a Christian life,
- d. who do not in any way encourage, or affiliate with, any ~~ungodly~~ society, *Secret*
- e. who agree to subject themselves to the regulations adopted by the congregation not in conflict with the word of God, and to Christian Discipline as laid down in Math. 18.

ART. 2. New members can be received at any regular meeting of the congregation. Such applicants as come provided with letters of dismissal from a congregation in full union of faith and practice with this congregation shall be received at once. Others may be proposed by any voting member for reception. After their names have been proposed it shall be the duty of the pastor and church-council to examine the applicant in regard to his (or her) faith, and to report at the next regular meeting of the congregation, when final action shall be taken on his (or her) reception into the congregation. All newly received members of the congregation shall be announced from the pulpit at the first service after their reception. All newly received male members shall subscribe the constitution of the congregation. The names of female members shall be entered on the church-record by the secretary.

ART. 3. It shall be the duty of each member:

- a. to attend the public services as regularly as possible,
- b. to participate as often as possible in the celebration of the Holy Supper,
- c. to register his (or her) name as a communicant previous to Confession and Absolution,
- d. to bring his children to the Lord in Holy Baptism,
- e. to send them to the pastor for religious instruction,
- f. to contribute according to his means toward the support of the minister as well as toward the other expenses of the congregation.

ART. 4. All confirmed male members who are not under discipline shall receive the right to vote and hold office.

ART. 5. Any member violating any of the principles laid down in the first and third articles of this chapter shall be dealt with according to Matthew 18.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PASTOR.

The office of Pastor in this congregation can be committed to such a minister only as acknowledges all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, and the collective symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as drawn from the Word of God and named in chapter II., to which he is to bind himself in accepting the call.

E. M. Coulter
p 44308

CHAPTER V.

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

The congregation, as a body, has the highest power in the management of all internal and external ecclesiastical and congregational affairs; no arrangement or decision for the congregation or for a church member as such has any validity, whether it proceed from an individual or from a body in the congregation, if it is not made in the name of, and according to the general or particular authority given by the congregation; and that which is arranged or decided by individuals or small bodies in the name and by the authority of the congregation, may at any time be brought before the congregation, as the highest tribunal, for final decision. Nevertheless the congregation has no right to arrange or decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the symbols of the pure Evangelical Lutheran Church; should she do so, all such arrangements are null and void.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH COUNCIL.

ART. 1. The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, who is ex-officio president, four Elders and four Deacons, and four Trustees.

ART. 2. It shall be the duty:

- a. of the Elders to assist the Pastor in the administration of church discipline and to perform such services as may be needed during the administration of the Holy Sacrament and in visiting the sick and afflicted and in general to do all in their power to promote the welfare of the congregation, and as ex officio Trustees to take

charge of all deeds and other valuable papers of the congregation, and to be its representatives at law.

- b. of the Deacons, faithfully to distribute the moneys collected for the support of the poor, and to collect necessary means for the support of the pastor and other necessary expenses of the congregation.

ART. 3. The general duties of the Council are to see that the rules and regulations of the congregation be carried out, and to see that church discipline be properly exercised on all members who hold erroneous views with regard to doctrines of the church, or live in open vice.

ART. 4. The election of new members of the Council to fill vacancies shall be held in any regular congregational meeting; the Elders and Deacons shall be elected for an indefinite time.

ART. 5. Two-thirds of the Council with the Pastor (except when the pastorate is vacant) shall constitute a quorum.

CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ART. 1. The congregation elects one Secretary and one Treasurer.

ART. 2. Should at any time a separation take place in the congregation (which God forbid !), the church property and all its advantages shall belong to that party

which remains faithful to this constitution and binds its pastor to do the same.

ART. 3. By-laws and amendments to this Constitution may be made at any regular congregational meeting by a vote of not less than two-thirds of the members present; provided, however, that the subject matter of such by-law or amendment be published to the congregation at least two weeks beforehand.

ART. 4. The above regulation applies to all the articles of this constitution except Chapter II. Chapter III, Articles 1, 3, and 5; Chapter IV; Chapter V; and Chapter VII, Article 4, which are unchangeable.

BY-LAWS.

1. There shall be four regular congregational meetings during the year, to be held, on the third Sunday in January and every three months thereafter; and one-half of the voting members shall constitute a quorum, provided that each one absent send a valid excuse or be counted as consenting. (i. e. Every absent member not sending a valid excuse is looked upon as being present.)

2. Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the pastor at any time; it shall be his duty, however, to do so when requested by the Council or by three church members.



